

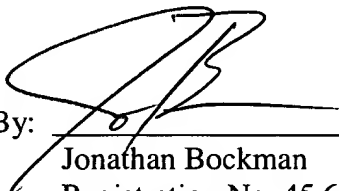
The Examiner has misunderstood applicant's arguments presented in the Amendment dated April 9, 2004. Shibita did not find that the exposed Ni layer can react with N₂ in the atmosphere preventing good ohmic characteristics. **Applicant** was the one who found that an exposed Ni layer can react with N₂ in the atmosphere preventing good ohmic characteristics as explained on page 8, line 32 to page 9, line 37 of the present application. Accordingly, since Shibita does not state that an exposed Ni layer can react with N₂ in the atmosphere, it would not be obvious from Shibita to cover the entire Ni layer to prevent the reaction with N₂. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 8 should be withdrawn. The rejection of claims 9, 10 and 12, which depend from claim 8, should be withdrawn for at least the same reasons.

For the foregoing reasons, a notice of allowance is solicited.

In the event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing docket no. **245402001600**.

Respectfully submitted,

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